

NEW COMPUTER EXPRESS

First news, first reviews - every week



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first laptop

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PC SHOPPING SPECIAL



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AMIGA SHOCK

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**WE ARE THE
CHAMPIONS?**

*The peculiar tale of
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Best sellers, best tips

Help on five of the
biggest Christmas
treats: Operation Wolf,
Afterburner, Thunderblade,
R-Type and Batman



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Sizzling coin-op batch up for grabs



• Shrink! Not property

A job lot of "tap switch" coin-op licences are currently up for grabs for the software house willing to spend an estimated £500,000.

French software publisher FE last month went into receivership with the rights to eight Japanese coin-ops in its possession. Its UK agent The Sales Curve is currently negotiating with various software houses one of which is believed to be Virgin/Mastertronic.

Heading the arcade games is beat-'em-up Shinobi as well as driving game Continental Circus and Ninja Warrior. One unlisted software publisher described the floating games as "bloody good stuff".

The games were to appear under the Rebel label. Indeed, it is thought that if a company such as Virgin/Mastertronic were to buy the games it would be adding a whole new label to its stable.

Virgin/Mastertronic though is denying any interest in the titles. "We're not chasing them," said a spokesman. "We're very selective about the coin-ops we publish, such as Double Dragon."

Whatever the outcome of the negotiations, games can look forward to the first titles arriving within the next few months. Despite FE's difficulties, programming and development has gone on unabated. "We'll still have three games out in the first quarter of this year," explained The Sales Curve's boss Jens Cernagoh. "And there'll be another two to follow in the spring."

The day Nintendo came to town...

This week's Computer Entertainment Show in Las Vegas only went to prove what we already knew - that Nintendo can still wield absolute power in the big money US leisure market.

The firm's enormous stand dominated the packed hall with grateful gamers craning up to see the Japanese giant. They watched their own few pieces of the Nintendo empire and judiciously paraded their newest games.

In contrast, Sega's stand

seemed reduced, as if that firm had realised that any attempts to imitate Nintendo would necessarily fall short. There's a real buzz with Nintendo's "Shuttle" logo; offered one automated spokesman, "Sega's stand is crowded and really busy."

In the bars and lounge talk was mostly of Nintendo's forthcoming clash with Atari Games. Should the latter win, everybody agreed, the lucrative console scene will be changed forever.

All this rather overblown, the CES debut of Ryn, MacProse, Medagun, Taito and UK hopefuls.

Not all can take heart that the stand fees and light costs and hotel bills will have been well spent. Businessmen from every corner of the US and from every country on earth descended on Las Vegas for the event, which is surely bigger than the PC show. The men have 2% hotels. Last weekend there wasn't a vacant room.

Liverpool foul up baffles publishers

An extraordinary sequence of events and misunderstandings has meant that gamers can expect not one, but two Liverpool computer games this year - as well as a further two bearing Liverpool players.

Grandstar announced that it had secured the official Liverpool licence late last year and that a game would be appearing "some time in '87". However, a small company called Video Images last week claimed that it had secured the Liverpool licence and that a budget game would be appearing by Easter.

It would appear though that Liverpool has managed to secure licence fees for two games. Grand Star has the rights on the team whilst Video Images has the whole football club.

To confuse matters further Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish - who personally endorsed Grand Star's game recently - is already featured on a game by Newcastle based Zapiks. And Kop bar Peter Beardsley is also featured in a game - by Grandstar.

"When I saw that Grandstar had the licence I was really worried because we already had approval," said Video Images Dave Colley. "That we've got the club but not the team." In effect this means that Video Images can't use the players to promote the game in the same way that Grandstar can.

Speaking from Las Vegas, Grandstar's boss Stephen Hall told Express: "There's obviously been some confusion but I have to stress that there's no animosity at all. I



• English: Three game confusion

hope that we can settle this in a mature fashion. I'm certainly not going crazy and spitting blood."

Two new Amiga games packs due this month

THANKS A BUNDLE

COMODORE.

Commodore will be selling the Amiga 500 bundled with free games from the end of this month.

In effect, it will mean that Commodore has at last responded to the extraordinary success Atari has had with bundling games for its own 16-bit machine, the ST.

Two separate offers are involved. The first includes nine free games as well as the standard modulator as the normal Amiga price of £399. The titles are Bubble Ghost (Interphase), Nettball (Newport), Grandstar and Starforce (both Logistix), Alak and

Better Dead than Alive (both Entertainment International), International Soccer (Microdeal), Winner Olympiad (Tyasoft) and Spelling Image (Dynamik).

The second is more likely to appeal to experienced computer users. Costing £150 it features an Amiga 500 upgraded to one 1Mb with a copy of the six disk epic game Dragon's Lair.

The upgrade would normally cost £150 so effectively buyers are getting Dragon's Lair for free. That can only be played on an upgraded Amiga and would normally cost £50 anyway. Commodore will be the only company officially allowed to sell the game in this country for the next three months.

Those who opt for the second bundle will also be able to play the upcoming number of 1Mb games which are being imported from the US, including the likes of Dungeon Master.

Although this represents Commodore's first foray into games bundles with the Amiga it is not the only one on offer. Dealers are already selling a ten game pack put together by



• Amiga: Two bundles due

A2000 next for bundle treatment?

Behind all the excitement of the Amiga games offer lies the strong possibility of a business bundle in the very near future.

Commodore watchers though are all but ruling out any such deal on the A2000, favouring a special A2000 model which will include an impressive bundle of business software coupled with a price rise. Top brass at Commodore are known to be underpinning the machine to be underpinned at its pre-

sent tag of £1,495.

One insider told Express: "Corporate buyers are reluctant to believe that the A2000 is a worthwhile machine and better than those which are two or three times the price. Once the doors have been opened though they say that it's phenomenal. There is a school of thought which says that the price should go up with extra software added."

distributor SSG (Express 8).

Commodore is prioritising not to comment on the matter although an announcement is expected within the week.

OPERATION WOLF TAKES TOP SLOT



• Operation Wolf: 1988's winner

Demon's Operation Wolf has landed the gaming industry's biggest prize: the Christmas number one.

The company all but dominated 1988's most important chart by also taking the second spot with RoboCop as well as having six other titles placed in the Top Twenty. RoboCop might well have surprised everybody

and taken the prize itself, had it been released on the ST and Amiga. According to Gallop it has been out-selling Op Wolf on all the 8-bit formats.

This is the first time in three years that US Gold hasn't been in the top slot. In 1986 it won with Gauntlet and again last year with Out Run. This time, the company had to make do with fifth place with ThunderStrike.

"To rise to win the top spot and to make all the Christmas merchandise," said Ozone's Tracey Crook. "But we didn't get any personal satisfaction out of kicking US Gold off the top."

The other hot tip - Activision's Afterburner - came in fourth place with Melbourne House's Double Dragon proving to be the dark horse of the race with a creditable third

ranking in the Gallop listings.

An always compilation featured well with live in the Top Twenty - Gladius (US Gold), In Crowd (Ozone), Turbo Outrun (Ozone), Gladius, Sea and March 2 (Ozone) and Supreme Challenge (Boon Jolly).

Activision bags Roger Rabbit



• Roger Rabbit: All formats deal

Stunning graphic extravaganzas like Framed Roger Rabbit has been scooped up by Activision and should be appearing on most major formats.

The game - developed by Walt Disney's software arm Buena Vista and based on the blockbuster movie - has already appeared here on the Amiga via ragdoll Golester. Activision stresses that it has the "official rights".

It should be launching the Amiga version later this month at £24.95 with other versions set to follow later in the year.

ST gallery

Alan ST specialist Electric Distribution is to launch a pair of floppy packages - pictures which can be printed onto documents. Scanlet costs £40 and features 100 "professionally drawn and useful" pictures. Drawlet is £15 more expensive and sports 150 pictures. This, says the firm, has more unusual illustrations.

haven't ruled out a continuation of this trend but signs of a smoothing out are being cited.

Dataquest's chip expert Jim Beveridge said in his 1989 forecast that there would be "some correction to the old syndrome" because chip makers and computer companies are becoming more organised with their inventories.

"The Japanese moving up the technical spectrum has caused a shortage," says a BSW spokesman to Express. "But there is now a better yield on popular chips. The problem is that the market as technology driven and you have to move on to new projects very quickly." Babbage would be the result of a settling of the 1 Megabyte issue, he said.

He predicted that whilst it was possible that an easing of the chip crisis might mean PC prices slipping these were other factors which might prompt such a trend.

Nintendo hits back

Japanese console giant Nintendo has turned its legal artillery on Atari Games following the latter's \$100 million lawsuit of three weeks ago (Express 8).

Nintendo's games console has established itself as the leading toy in the US but Nintendo has always kept a tight grip on software written for the machine. Licensees have to pay to produce games.

Atari Games rebuffed against this at the end of last year and launched a legal attack on the Japanese, along with accusations of Nintendo misappropriating the market

unfairly. Its subsidiary Tengen has produced its own version of the games. Nintendo is not pleased.

Nintendo is accusing Tengen of breach of contract, unfair competition and activities which violate the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act. It has also officially threatened the original licensing deal.

The firm says that Tengen has received vital information and help whilst working with Nintendo. Nintendo's engineers are currently examining Tengen's games to see if they violate any

patents or copyrights. The firm is also promising to put up a fight against Atari Games' original lawsuit.

"Having obtained the benefits of the licensing arrangements Tengen has associated that it will begin to independently manufacture and distribute games for the Nintendo which it previously sold under license with Nintendo," said the firm's US senior vice president Howard Lincoln. Atari Games' original suit, he said was an "obvious ploy to divert attention from Tengen's plan to violate the license agreement."

Chip drought: end in sight

Not for the first time industry pundits have heralded the end of the damaging D-Ram chip drought which has beset the world's hardware manufacturers for more than a year.

Leading analysts Dataquest and Bantides de Zoete Weiss (BSW) were last week forecasting cheaper chips and more of them by 1989. The possibility of PC prices coming down as a result has been aired, although this seems unlikely.



• D-Ram: Rover future predicted

The chip drought was blamed mainly on Japanese microchip manufacturers concentrating on the more profitable 1 Megabyte chips at the expense of the popular 256 KiloByte versions. This occurred in the wake of US/Japanese trade tensions. This has caused companies such as Amstrad and Atari to raise prices, or announce shipment delays in the past.

A requirement to the new technology and recognition on the part of the Japanese has given rise to the latest optimism. American companies are desperately trying to regain a footing in the chip market but are still lagging behind.

The drought is nothing new to the market. For the past 30 years companies have jilted from severe shortages and high prices to great numbers of cheap chips. Optimists

GAMES TOP TWENTY FULL PRICE

1	Operation Wolf	Spec. CM CPC, ST Amiga	£22.95
2	RoboCop	Spec. CM CPC	£22.95
3	Double Dragon	Spec. CM ST Amiga	MSX/Amiga £22.95
4	Afterburner	Spec. CM CPC, ST	£17.95/24.95
5	Thunder Blade	Spec. CM CPC, ST Amiga	£22.95/2
6	Gladius	Spec. CM CPC	£22.95/2
7	Falcon	Spec. CM ST Amiga	MSX/Amiga £22.95
8	R-Type	Spec. CM CPC, ST	£22.95/24.95
9	Football Manager 2	Spec. CM CPC, ST Amiga, PC	£19.95/2
10	In Crowd	Spec. CM CPC	£22.95
11	Boltman	Spec. CM CPC, ST Amiga	£22.95
12	Tale Coin-ops	Spec. CM CPC	£22.95
13	Game Set and Match 2	Spec. CM CPC	£22.95
14	Last Ninja 2	Spec. CM CPC	£19.95/2
15	Horses of the Lance	Spec. CM CPC, ST Amiga	£22.95/2
16	Panorama	Spec. CM CPC, ST Amiga, MSX	£19.95/24.95
17	Return Of The Jedi	Spec. CM CPC, ST Amiga	£22.95/2
18	Rambo 3	Spec. CM CPC, ST	£22.95
19	Supreme Challenge	Spec. CM CPC	£22.95/2
20	Drily Thompson's Dyst. Chail.	Spec. CM CPC, ST Amiga	£22.95/2

GAMES TOP TEN BUDGET

1	Joe Blade 2	Spec. CM CPC, ST, BBC, CM, Electron	£4.95/5
2	Ghostbusters	Spec. CM CPC, Amiga, MSX, MSX	MSX/Amiga £4.95
3	Bomb Jack	Spec. CM CPC, ST, Amiga, MSX	MSX/Amiga £4.95
4	Through the Top Door	Spec. CM CPC	£4.95/Amiga
5	Back to Skool	Spec. CM CPC	£4.95/Amiga
6	Commando	Spec. CM CPC, BBC, CM, Electron	MSX/Amiga £4.95
7	Footballer Of The Year	Spec. CM CPC, BBC, MSX, Amiga, CM, MSX	MSX £4.95
8	Skidzoids	Spec. CM CPC	£4.95/Amiga
9	End Zone	Spec. CM CPC	£4.95/Amiga
10	Nobita Dribble Duo	Spec. CM CPC	£4.95/Amiga

COMPILED BY GALLUP

MSX/Amiga £4.95/MSX £4.95/Amiga £4.95

War breaks out over war game

Highly regarded strategy war game **UMS** (Universal Military Simulator) has become the focal point for yet another inter-company battle.

The game is sourced from Iowa-based Intergalactic Development but is published by Rainbird. However, the follow up, **UMS II**, is to be sold around the world by Birmingham-based WJ Gold. Intergalactic says that Rainbird has the original **UMS** poorly. Rainbird has retorted that the American firm is more because it rejected the sequel.

"We decided that we just couldn't allied to its business with Rainbird any more - it was costing us so much in lawyers and accountants to get them to pay bills," said Intergalactic president Ezra Sidon. "They did a good job but at what cost? They do very bad business."

Rainbird swiftly responded to the harsh criticism. "I'm surprised he's said this about us because he's always been such a nice guy," said the firm's Julia Coombes. "Perhaps he's just upset that we rejected the game. It's not up to the standard of something we'd want to publish."

Either way, WJ Gold will be launching the game in the summer on ST, Amiga, PC, C64 and Mac. Prices have not been confirmed.



Midget with more muscle

Fledgling PC manufacturer **ACPM** has upgraded its 'Micro Midget' machine to include a 20MB hard disk drive.

The new Micro Midget XX will cost £1,099 as opposed to the original XX which still retails at £895. **ACPM** is also offering a £449 disk drive upgrade kit for the 1,000 or so existing users. A 40MB version is also planned for later this winter.

The Micro Midget is so called because of its small desktop footprint: 16" by 10". This, claims the firm, is a factor more and more companies are taking into account.



• Polar Expedition: Real life computer-controlled pictures

Computer users head for the icy wastes

The first interactive videodisc released by Virgin offers students the chance to take part in a uniquely realistic simulation of an expedition to the North Pole.

North Polar Expedition runs on the BBC Domesday laser disk system which is installed in more than 2,000 UK schools and consists of a laser disk drive hooked up to a BBC micro and monitor (MS-DOS and RMLL versions are to follow). The package allows five users operating as a team to follow in the footsteps of Arctic explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes.

The students are offered puzzles and questions as they travel

across the polar ice. And from time to time they come up against perils generated at random such as polar bears and crevasses. According to the progress they make the monitor displays 'extraordinary' film and slide footage of the original expedition.

Despite its sophistication, at £199 North Polar Expedition should be affordable for most schools. "It will help teach people Geography, which education has had some trouble with," said Virgin's William Beckett. "It also offers people the ability to use inter-personal skills."

PSION PLANS LONGER LASTING LAPTOP

World famous handheld computer company Psion is working on plans for a laptop machine designed to operate for longer on a set of batteries than any rival.

The firm is saying nothing about the project but it emerged last week that the machine is planned for launch in the autumn - around the time of the PC Show. And given the company's track record the price is

likely to be within reach of the mass market.

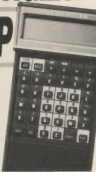
Although the machine has been under development for a year now it still has not been given a name. Psion engineers and technicians are still only calling it 'the laptop'.

But an informed source told *Express* the laptop will probably utilise data storage technology similar to the Psion Organizer handheld: that of removable EPROM cartridges as opposed to floppy disks.

There is already a base of such software ranging in price from £12 to £100 depending on storage capacity and applications.

The ability for the laptop to be able to communicate with PCs is also being given a high priority.

Just before Christmas Psion bought up Milton Keynes-based modest company Dacorn for an initial consideration of £4.5 million. "I think it's fair to assume that Psion is very interested in the communications market," said the source.



• Organizer: Laptop sister by autumn

He added: "Psion's engineering strengths are in the ability to offer twice power consumption with a large amount of storage."

He said the laptop will use six batteries and that whereas most laptops exhausted a set of batteries within about four hours, the new machine would offer up to a week of continuous use.

Q. Who's famous for shouting Eureka?

Archimedes was an often fondly regarded one of the boldest of the computer users' world - so Sharp Mura has come up with a package to test their mettle.

Archimedes contains more than 1,500 questions and costs £495. "It's simple enough to use but the questions can be difficult," said Mura director Deputy Scott. Mura also has 0640 277.

Computing: It's a man's man's world

Girls are losing out when it comes to learning on computers, according to a book published this week.

Celia Hoyle, a maths professor at London University, says boys dominate computers in schools with girls being left behind. In the

book she says boys are more likely to opt for computers as a subject in itself being more likely to have computers at home.

"It is difficult to avoid the disturbing conclusion that girls are learning less than boys about computers," she

says. Recommendations include using computers for all subjects rather than just for computing.

Also in the book Lynne Carr comments: "Competitions are still promoted for men. Even at Christmas we saw adverts for computer

games with a boy at the keyboard, talking to his dad. As long as this male orientated approach exists girls will be put off."

Girls and Computers costs £3.50 from the Institute of Education, 20, Bedford Way, London, WC1R 0AB.

NEW COMPUTER EXPRESS

OUR OPINION

Ocean Software has pulled off a remarkable coup in snatching the top two spots in the lucrative Christmas games software chart.

And although many in the leisure computing industry are green with envy, the majority would admit the Manchester crowd - recently voted software house of the year - fully deserve its Gallup victory.

US Gold's massive victory the previous year with dubious versions of Out Run was widely seen as a triumph of marketing clout over program quality.

So it's something of a relief that this time the top spots went to titles worthy of the honour. Operation Wolf the number 1 is a fine arcade conversion, and runner up Robocop is not far short of brilliant.

Evidently Ocean meant what it said a year ago when it proclaimed a new commitment to program quality.

Well done, boys. You delivered.

Football mad D&H changes tactics

Somebody games firm D&H is planning to field yet another line-up of football titles - but it admits that it may soon have to change its game plan.

With the range of possible untitled football games fast running out, the firm is planning to bring on a new line-up of strategy games from other sports such as horse racing, motor racing, cricket, snooker and boxing.

D&H has built itself on the Football Director series plus titles like International Manager and Two Player Super League. New titles in the range include a budget title of Soccer 9, Cup Football and Euro Super Cup.

"I suppose we'll run out of football ideas in the end," said joint boss Tony Haggard. "But for the moment we're planning another Football Director with graphic players which respond to their own special skills."

New games such as The Manager, Grand Prix Manager, Snooker Manager, Snooker Manager II and Cricket Capitals should be arriving over the next few months on all formats.

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1 Fulham Palace Road, London SW6 6LN, UK
Tel: 01-834 4888 • Fax: 01-834 4889

PC monitors going cheap(er)

Growing competition in the market for high-resolution PC graphics has led to aggressive price cutting from one of the big players.

Citron Europe has lowered the price of its COM-104 high end colour monitor from £795 to £540 making it "approximately half the price of the comparable IBM monitor". The unit is capable of an enhanced VGA resolution of 1024 x 768.

It is expected to appeal particularly to PS/2 system users, although to make full use of the monitor's resolution they will require IBM's optional EISA/4 board.

Owners of other PCs can obtain the same resolution by buying Citizen's PC 1000 graphics display board. The price on this has been cut to £380.



MICROPROSE CHASES UK SOFTWARE RICHES

Ambitious US software house MicroProse has swooped into Europe to sign up "the very best" arcade games for the ever hungry American market.

The simulation specialist intends taking short-cut-ups and strategy games back across the Atlantic. A deal has been signed with Oxfordshire based Hewson - and talks are also under way with French publisher Loriciel and another unnamed UK software house.

Publishers who strike a deal with MicroProse will have their products sold under a new label in the US called Medallion. Hewson's first three games to go Stateside will be Illusionist, Netrunner and Exotic.

"We're real excited about this," enthused MicroProse president Bill Stealey to Express. "We've done a big survey here (in America) and the hard core simulation people only account for about 25 per cent of gamers. We want to get to the hard core audience people as well."

I've already said that we intend being a \$100 million company."

Hewson's boss Andrew Hewson told Express: "If the world suddenly didn't want to play simulations then MicroProse would have a problem. I was looking for an American partner and they are ideal."

SHOWTIME FREEBIES

High profile business software publisher Ashton-Tate is going to be doing out \$12,000 worth of free software at the Which Computer? show next month.

A prize draw will be held at the end of each day of the exhibition held at the NEC in Birmingham. Winners will be going home with the likes of dBase IV, Fairview Professional and Framework. Which? will be held from 21st to 24th February.

MICRO-BOOM

Between 1983 and 1987 the proportion of manufacturing companies using computers rose from 42 to 72 per cent according to a government report on Britain published last week.



• **STEVE EARS** swoop

Battle of the Amiga Basics

Amiga owners looking to improve on the Basic supplied with their machine are spoilt for choice with the launch of two new packages.

Cornwall based Microcode has brought out the £64.95 CFA Basic which was formerly on the ST; and Hilsfort has dealt out its own Hilsfort Basic priced at £79.95.

Not surprisingly both firms

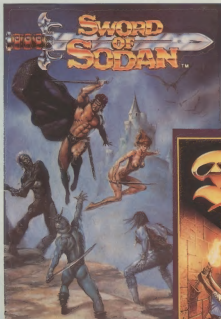
claim their package is the better Microcode offering to access with the ST version with claimed sales of 70,000. Hilsfort is pointing out that its package is a compiler rather than an interpreter and is compatible with AmigaBasic. So indeed the first 1,000 copies are being bundled with a free programming guide to AmigaBasic.

"Despite problems in the past Basic is still the best language to learn on and you can see that experience with other languages," said Hilsfort's Andy Pennell. "Now that the Amiga market has grown so much I don't see any reason why CFA shouldn't do as well as it did on the ST," was the Microcode line.



• **HILSFORT BASIC:** Sparring with CFA

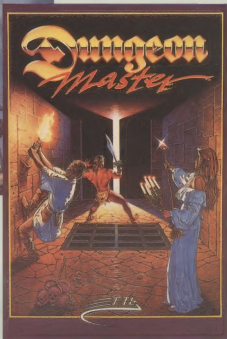
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offering from Topsoft" software had they bought a load of boring rubbish.

If people can get pleasure out of cracking this junk, just say best of luck to them, and they will get very little pleasure out of playing 95 per cent of them.

Also if my experience, the majority of copied games are in the hands of children who would not have bought the original anyway because they can't afford to. I recently visited a friend who had just purchased an Amiga. When I arrived at his house he was playing a game called *Slingshot*. I watched him for a while and it was indeed very boring, and I realised that I loved to have the same game for a £250. I think it was called *Defender*. Is this producing innovative software? Absolutely, when I talk about pirates I am not referring to commercial games.

J. Huby, Glastonbury, West Yorks

✓ Sure there's a load of junk around, but that's where the magazines come in. Too many *synopsis* reviews have done a disservice to games players everywhere—even if they have helped boost advertising revenues in the short term. It's my knowledge, critical reviews and avoid the dross.

MEMOTECHNICALITIES

I must pay the thanks of these writing to you and start by praising your efforts. A great mag, and the first I have bought regularly in ages. I am a long suffering Memotech owner, but we won't go into that just yet.

My reason for writing is twofold. Firstly, please find attached photocopies of an advert from several years back, for a speech recognition unit. A couple of months ago I wrote to another computer magazine to enquire if the company and/or product still existed. I was

ANOTHER PHONE MESS...

After reading about your planned piece on common *Amiga* issues I thought I'd write and give my opinion on modern *picture*.

Maybe it's the scorching 85 summer of '88 and I'd just obtained a spanking new Pace Lanner modem. I was thrilled and was 'online' immediately. I was working out my code using a little booklet from BT, gave my parents a carefully calculated amount according to how long I'd used the modem and where I was phoning.

Our usual telephone bill is around £60. I had to pay for anything over and above that.

I must admit it was great fun, in fact I think I became mildly addicted. The day wasn't complete without a bit of downloading.

Near the end of last one quarter I had given my parents around £30 (more than enough, I thought). Just to be prudent, my mother phoned BT for an estimate on the above bill. Back came the astounding figure of £2700.

As you would expect, the modem was immediately confiscated, and after many heated words, my pocket money was taken away (surprise, surprise).

But this was not the end of my sorry



tale. After about a week's time, the bill arrived and it had miraculously increased to £3000.

Remember, I wasn't online at this time. The moral of this story is it is always be generous when calculating costs, so don't have children!

David J. Bayle, Chert, Hertfordshire

✓ We're such crackers for tales of woe that we've decided to award you a Mystery Prize. To help you work out your costs more accurately—should you ever be allowed within sight of your modern again—a *we* calculator is being dispatched forthwith.

included an SAE but have had no reply! I am repeating the exercise with a far more reputable mag.

My second point is that there seems to be a glitch in one of your articles. It has in fact occurred on several editions. It refers to the Christmas issue, page 15. It is a *Silica* Amiga advert. In the software section, the Tenebris screen and the Tenebris screen seem to be identical... at that night! I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Neil Stuart, Ransleigh, Abies

✓ As far as we can tell, the company you refer to (William Stuart Systems) is no longer in existence. Possibly that's because there isn't a terrific demand for speech recognition units for Memotech these days, if anyone is in possession of such a product as a 'Big Ear' (we had you not) and wishes to tell it, then perhaps they could contact us.

As for the Silica advert, you're absolutely spot on. Fortunately, such errors have nothing to do with us. Quite clearly *Silica* was so excited at the prospect of appearing in *Express* once more that it suffered a peculiar repetition. It can happen to anyone. It can happen to anyone.

ACE LETTER

I started to read *Express* because after purchasing an Amstrad PC1640, I found it an extremely good magazine which combines the latest news in the world of computing, entertainment and vectors for the serious users of a computer, as well as 'generalists' or both. We are!

I found *Express* through ACE which I stopped paying for various reasons, namely because the free gift in the next issue was not going to fit my format. I wonder how many ACE readers feel the same way? and have not missed an issue since.

Kashif Qurashi, Hayes, Middlesex

✓ That's a bit harsh on ACE, surely. Truly in the great scheme of things it is a window publication, regardless of whether or not its freebies are as near machines. The only way it's just won *Magazine of the Year* from the whole games industry. (There again, if only because *Express* hadn't been around long enough...)

SOME OCEAN NOTIONS

I was interested to read your article on the kind of Ocean Software regarding how software for the more 'naïve' games user. I most certainly will not purchase any software from their customer relations non-existent.

I returned on the 26th September 1988 an Amiga World disk which failed to load correctly, but no disk was returned.

I wrote again on the 3rd November 1988, no reply.

page the *typo* and ask for some more numbers.

Here is a list of some games that I have hacked: Hypertronics BBC Disk Thunderblade C64 Disk Moon Buggy C64 Disk and Operation Wolf C64 Disk.

I can hack most Novasides. You should have given your brother a challenge—ask him to transfer *Exploding Fist* from cassette to disk just to minimize. If you try X can do this, then he is not a disk hacker because I can't. By the way, if you want a software by the Virus Man, I can give you some of the bulletin boards.

My favourite hacked game is *FRAX BBC* version. It's on Minnet.

The Virus Man, Scotland

PS Please Check Larry (PC) version out for a virus the day!

✓ What a remarkable misnomer. No wonder you're staying anonymous... Whatever, Mr X is coded both real and English. We considered some details in the original because we didn't want to encourage any other hackers or crackers or pirates. In a similar way, we've omitted your simply splendid spelling errors and linguistic oddities, since we don't want our readers to think that all crackers are, er, crackers. PS Four 'me' should be Leisne. San Larry isn't new at all to *Express* readers who read all about it back in issue 5.

IT'S A FAIR COPP?

I would like my opinion heard in the great Piracy Debate. I often receive copies of games from friends, colleagues, or relatives. Duggan Wester.

I thought this game was so good I bought it. I do the win all the cases I receive—I like the game, I buy it. If I don't, I've the right. That could be better than that. I had a copy of *Phoenix*. If I had bought the game for £20—£25 I would have been very disappointed (PC) disappointed as I would the disk.

Obviously, I can only speak for myself, but I see no harm in the piracy that I am involved in—I certainly don't pay anybody off, and I avoid buying games which would be a waste of my meagre gain.

David Penner, Jarrow, South Tyne and

✓ Sounds suspiciously like an exercise in conscience-cleansing. Do you really mean to say you go out and buy *EXTRA* pirated game you think is decent?

THE SOFTWARE BUSTING DEBATE

HARSH THE CRACKERS

For Gamblers. *Express* issue 6. Having read this article through a couple of times, my reactions are as follows. There is a lot of truth in what the guy said. Firstly, he is a cracker and not a hacker or pirate. There is a world of difference. He is not out to make any profit from someone else's hard work, nor is he out to make any mischief, but is merely responding to a challenge. Most of us respond to one type of challenge or another almost every day of our lives. It is what makes life interesting for the majority of people OK, so his preferred challenges are cracking software. I can see that. As to better than crack heads, same etc.

Secondly, as the guy said, 'most of it is crap'—I think you will agree that one half of a lot of games are just that—crap, and may possibly hold the attention of some adolescents for two or even three hours. The crap in no way justifies the price asked and paid. I would suggest, by unindisputable facts, unless, unless or whatever, buying for friends, Christmas etc. These soft machines, unsuspecting people, should be protected from getting with hard-earned cash for some of the software sludge on the market today.

Thirdly, the guy who said in answer to your question 'Why should friends give them to you if they spend money buying them?'—Because they get better versions of the game back in exchange, especially with games that are hard to play. Software houses could learn something from that remark, such as different levels of play. It's just a thought—maybe they already do, but judging from the remark, they don't.

Surely software houses would benefit from supplying the cracker with a new game and letting him crack it and after it, only to see what came back. They could have a contact card with the cracker, but was a 'cracker' card satisfied—was the cracker's need for that type of challenge, and the software house having the cracker report, difficulty to crack, levels of play etc. Surely to goodness it must be an avenue worth investigating, and beneficial on both sides of the fence!

There must also be more to be gained than I have writ-

ten about. Let's face it, software houses are not going to stop the cracker totally or otherwise. So for goodness sake, they should get their acts together and have the cracker join the team, even if only on a pay for results basis. Better surely above ground and working for them with all the benefits it must bring them underground having to spend money and time trying to beat him which can't be done, I'm sure you are following my drift. Eliminate the cracker by using him and his skills to your advantage, thus freeing time and money to catch the real villains, the pirates. The hackers can be left to the government.

Anyway, this is the view of a 15 year old Amiga owner, who, after a year of struggle with my machine, still can't access its libraries. OK, for a cracker's assistance at this location!

C Williams, Headington, Oxford

✓ Some software houses already use crackers in various ways to help improve their games. But it's really not a solution overall. We suspect most crackers much prefer their own semi-licit battles with software...

JUST CRACKERS

For the first time I bought your magazine on Dec 17th 1988, and I'm reading about your article on hackers and piracy. Your so called Hacker (Mr X) is not a hacker, he's a crackhead! He's way out of a paper bag!

Incidentally, is Mr X real? If so, he must be English! Also I think you made this article up. I have hacked most disk software on more 6502 machines. All I use is a disk section editor and a machine code monitor. Your Mr X is just a crackhead or something similar.

1988, and what was the point in deleting pieces of information when the average user of the final cartridge could just do a disk search for Thunderblade to find out what track the relevant addresses were in. I was selling hacked versions of Thunderblade before you got your copy.

Companet has nothing to do with hackers, but private bulletin boards do. In fact have a lot to do with them. If you don't believe me, go onto Minnet and the number should be on Prestel or Gamme at Home. Or go into Lighthouse and

All I wished to know, had my disk been received or had it been returned but lost on my way - still no reply.

I have on the 30th Jan 1988 written to the managing director, still no reply.

I have now informed all my friends and colleagues to let Ocean Software's very poor customer relations, also possibly poor quality disks and advised them, like me, to purchase other printer's software.

Keep up the good quality of your magazine which makes very good reading at a very reasonable price.

Brian J Odom, Sharnagh, Norfolk

X This matter is being checked through with Ocean once you read that, it has in fact been said. However, your difficulties come in something of a surprise since Ocean is quite possibly the smallest of all software houses when it comes to such matters. Certainly, if it happened regularly, David Ward's crew would long ago have rendered its position as the number one games publisher.

Having raised the topic, doubtless we'll now be deluged with tales of difficulties.

MAIL TALES

I am addressed to yet another Mail Order Company (MOC) to the wall. Not because they are out of business, but even among it the customers who lose out.

So, where does the blame lie? Well, obviously with the MOC concerned, but also with the magazines that publish their adverts. I can only say to a MOC who may now into difficulties, they run single and double page adverts, sometimes in colour, in several magazines, and they sell their goods at ridiculous discounts.

On average it costs £500.00 to run a single advert in one magazine per week (there it is a reality). In order to cover the cost of the advert alone (let alone all the other overheads they need) it will approximately £5,000.00 worth of goods. If you multiply this out over two weekly magazines and three weeklies, their monthly turnover has to be £60,000.00+. I reckon that's a reasonable figure.

So how can you spot a possible liability? Well, choose the company you wish to purchase from, and then pop down to Wilt Smiths and thumb through all the computer magazines, if they are prominent in all the mags with double page spreads in glorious colour - forget it.

So why are the magazines responsible? Well, they are so concerned about competing with each other and bling up their pages with adverts that they are blind to good business sense. If I buy stock from a supplier and don't pay for it within a reasonable time, they suspend further supplies to me. No magazines do that! Of course not, they just print more adverts. Not until the MOC is dead and buried, they show concern for you.

So is a magazine liable for your losses? Not directly, but morally, most definitely yes, and maybe legally yes. They have a responsibility to you as their customers. If it can be shown that they acted negligently and therefore contributing to the problems, you may just have a case.

I hope that those of you who have lost money (and I'm sure there will be many) involved in recovering your losses, but sadly I fear that it is money lost forever. But there is something called Mail Order Protection Scheme...

Steve Bonson, Managing Director, Future price Computers

A Though your comments are doubtless meant well, it really is taking matters a little too far to blame the magazines. Obviously, we're bound to say that. But we have a commercial interest in making sure that those companies who back ads with an ill-considered pay for them. And we can certainly not want our readers to be ripped

EXPRESS: COMPLACENT, BLASE

I have owned a PCW for two years now, and have been very satisfied with the high quality of Future Publishing's publications. In fact, I have even started to purchase New Computer Express, which, unlike the previous, is quite excellent, and certainly well worth the money.

However, I was sorry, surprised and saddened to read your response to H Tiddells letter (Issue 148) regarding his problems when purchasing computer goods. The simple fact is that he has a justified complaint, and nothing can justify - despite your weak excuses - what he has suffered. To say his problem is really an instant rather than a "real complaint" is utterly untrue. I've even got a game that wouldn't run properly, because I can't get a game that wouldn't run properly. You seem to think that customers should actually be grateful if they receive what they have ordered!

If you go to a shop and buy something, you expect it to be available/functional, working and complete, in my experience, when ordering computer items, this is the exception rather than the rule. It seems that it is just fine if a retailer doesn't comply with his/her side of the deal on the way, a contract to do this business is custom made for the customer? For example, if a retailer was given a customer's money for handing over goods, I can see how it would be a fair deal. Many, however, think that, in reality, it is all about the money.

However, some retailers - and apparently you also - are still willing to customers being coming into paying over their money, but not receiving the delivery (goods/service) as agreed - and then having to engage in a legal battle to get what they were promised and have paid for in good faith. The simple fact is that this is not only an unfair system, but becoming increasingly so.

We are supposed to be living in times of a "business customer" and "market forces", but to me, I interpret this as really meaning "Customer beware" - you are about to be ripped off, simply because so many don't seem to give a damn about reliability, contract compliance and integrity their days, and to imply, such as yourselves, are tolerant of this.

To say as you do that a lack of goods that are advertised is because of the failure of the supplier is pathetic. If someone advertises, they should be efficient enough to at least ensure they have the goods to not advertise them! But too difficult to comprehend, to tell the public, if everyone behaved in this sloppy, unbusinesslike, untruthful, lie, cheat, mislead and dishonest fashion, pure honesty would prevail and no one could be trusted. But this is what you promote.

off when companies go bust without paying goods that have been paid for.

Occasionally, the odd outfit will slip through the net. When you're working or hurt, that happens. But Express is especially vigilant: we'd be bankers to be otherwise.

PRIZE GUY

Four magazine is excellent, brilliant and super-duper. All the people that work at New Computer Express must be really talented and bright.

I have compiled a list (this e-mail of why I should be the mystery prize winner this week.



* "Yet another mail order company goes to the wall"

orders. Why should manufacturers and retailers have a wider right to refuse like this?

In a society which is becoming increasingly disabled, it is all the more to forget how this type of "bribe" (your words) affects low-income computer users. For example, there are a great number of people not coming because of lip, speech disability, who spend most of their lives in front of a computer and 420 or so is a lot of money which they may have saved up for many months. Or it might not be much to New Computer Express or even to its retailers, but it is a fortune to some people who find it very distressing to come up and have something to say to this, and then encounter this type of problem. You conveniently seem to have forgotten this.

appreciate that caring about and considering other people is not out of fashion these days, but some still believe this is a better option than just another instance of money from disability.

In sum, it is too complacent and blase to say that disability leads to this type of behaviour increasing.

Apart from the ethical question and the simple fact that surely you should get what you pay for, as promised without this means promises of fighting with a retailer/manufacturer to supply what was originally promised. New Computer Express should supply a little bit of thinking about its negative attitude - promises indicating its response to H Tiddells - and also consider how this looks to its readers who, after all, are in the same situation as the writer.

David J. Mistry, Bournemouth, Dorset

✓ Harsh words indeed, and many of your points are taken. But we are not at all complacent or complacent about the matter. We did after all help draw attention to SIC's failure to supply full goods and we have sorted the problem out for Mr. Tiddells.

It has also to be borne in mind that the complaint was about not receiving the instructions for a 100 in this instance - a straightforward game. Our response would've been different had it concerned a complex adventure being supplied without instructions, in which the game itself had been sent. So please don't take us to the moral centre of the matter.

It's doubtless very kind of us, but we're going to award you a prize for placing moral matters as the agenda. We'll send you a new PCW package. With instructions.

PS Some of the above facts are not true.

✓ Congratulations, you're now our very special prize winner for this month. (This may or may not be a true statement.)

HELP SPECTRUM ETERNAL

In reply to Mr Matthews' letter in Express issue 148, I have copies of both Fastlane and Double for the Spectrum in both hard and soft copy. I will be happy to supply you a copy of the magazine. I will be happy to supply you a copy of the magazine. I will be happy to supply you a copy of the magazine.

Unfortunately my Spectrum is the 16K issue 2 model which I upgraded with a disk keyboard and 32K RAM upgrade chip. My hardware is only four issues on tape. But if Mr Matthews would like to contact me, I should be able to give him the copies for both games.

Both games are very good considering that they are written in Basic.

Fastlane can be adapted for numerous players, and unlike PC type games, I have said, you play the full 10 games there are two screens, the playing screen and the score sheet, which can be accessed at any time in the game.

Double is a game for one player versus the computer, and is set to normal, crib rules but it does allow for mixed rules when playing cards, you control one of the team of a Jack, and the computer plays a mean game. Robert J. Allen, 39 Quarry Way, London SE15 6AG

✓ It fair warns the cockles of your heart when one reader helps another. In fact, we're so charitable that we're sending the helpful reader a prize. To wit: R-Type on the Spectrum.

How to be a smart PC software shopper



The world of PC software is endlessly baffling in its variety. Vast arrays of products all claiming to be the very best thing jostle for attention, each with different tech specs, prices and recommendations.

But which ones are the truly essential purchases? For word processing, general business, graphics, entertainment, music, utilities and communications, which packages will best fit your requirements without leaving you bankrupt? In the first in a series of definitive sector surveys, Express guides you through the minefield of choosing PC software

Since its introduction the IBM PC has earned a reputation as a hard-core business machine—the suite computer. However, in the UK it quickly became established as a home computer too.

And once it had penetrated the American household, the PC was subverted from its 'strictly business' demeanour—programming languages appeared, then graphics software, and games, and low-cost applications like word processing and databases.

In the UK, the PC hung on to its businesslike reputation much longer. Not until Allen Sugar launched the PC1512 did the PC begin to follow its American counterparts into the home. Now the UK market also supports a wide range of software, at prices from the sublimely cheap to the ridiculously expensive.

However, the industry continues to behave as though there were three completely different sets of PC users, with no overlap between them: the business user, the programmer, and the home user. If you're a typical PC owner, this makes it difficult to get information on all the different aspects of the PC because the business dealer won't talk about games and music, and the average games dealer doesn't know about PC applications like databases and spreadsheets.

To solve this problem, here is the Express guide to PC Essentials—the software packages that make a place in everyone's program library. Unless you're after computerizing your job-holding operation, or robotic control over shareware radio, you should find this collection of classic software sufficient to equip you for every eventuality.

WORD PROCESSING

Just about everyone processes words ('writing', as the activity used to be known). But the PC boasts more WP programs than any other computer, and picking your way through the mass can be difficult.

Recommending word processors is also difficult because, like shirts and woollen jumpers, they're largely a matter of personal choice. However...

For those on a tight budget or with limited word processing needs, the first choice should be **Textword** (£30, Tansar Software, 0542 438761). Although it does have some limitations, it provides all the basics for creating, editing and printing text which, after all, is what it's all about.

Further up the scale in performance as well as price is **Protext** (£80, Astric, 0733 228011). Protext is fast and powerful and adds extra features including a good spell checker, macro language and mail merge.

Mail merge, if you were wondering, is a method of being obscenely familiar with people you never met. It is how **Readers Digest** manages to send you letters that you may change like. Imagine, Mr Smith, how a new Porsche 911 would look outside 123 Acacia Avenue? What the author actually wrote was 'Imagine, (Smith), how a new Porsche 911 would look outside (Smith)', and the mail merge utility inserts the appropriate names and addresses.

Finally, for users needing compatibility with a 'word processor' word processor. **Microsoft Word** (£100, Microsoft, 0245 282017) provides the connection from the most popular business WP package, as well as offering macros, spell checking, and the ability to edit multiple documents. To make handling this power easier, **Multiwriter 2** provides on-line help. There's a pop-up calculator, too.

BUSINESS

The best buys for small-scale business applications on the PC are definitely the integrated packages—single programs that provide multiple applications.

Easily the best value must be **Mini Office Personal** (£30, Database Software, 0425 478888). It provides modules for word processing, database,

spreadsheet, and communications, and while few of these are especially brilliant they do allow you to swap data between the various parts, and these are size or two surprisingly good features (see **Personal** support in the centre modules). **Mini Office** is a good choice for anyone who thinks they might need businesslike software on their home computer. At least, at the price, you won't get your fingers burned if it turns out you don't need it after all.

More professional and rather more powerful is **Microsoft's excellent Works** (£45, Microsoft, 0734 500741). It gives you much the same collection of applications—WP, database, spreadsheet, communications and business graphics—but its main plus is the excellent on-screen help facility and series of interactive tutorial sessions.

Each of the modules is good enough to stand against much of the dedicated competition, and swapping facts and figures from spreadsheet to database to word processor is as easy as you could want.

Also worth a mention in this category is **Ability** (£35, Miger, 01 493 2055). A similar collection of utilities to the others, if a little slow at times, but very popular because it was bundled free with the **Amstrad 1512** for a while.

GRAPHICS

The PC has a reputation as a poor graphics system. On the most common CGA-equipped PCs you have only four colours in 320x200 resolution, or 640x200 resolution in black and white only—sufficing to get the average ST or Amiga owner excited. For the moment, PC graphics software tends to be overlooked.

PD and shareware for the real bargains

One of the great attractions of the PC is the enormous range of public domain and shareware software available.

Public domain, or PD, programs are free and you pay only for the disk, and the costs of copying, documentation and postage incurred by the library you buy it from.

Shareware is sold in similar fashion but you agree only to try to evaluate the software. If you decide to keep and use the program you then pay a registration fee which is usually much less than the price of a comparable commercial program and which entitles you to receive upgrades and usually printed documentation and technical support.

Cynics might assume that anything free is worth what you pay for it—nothing. But there are gems a most PD libraries, often as good as anything available commercially. Furthermore, PD libraries are good sources for unusual programs that simply aren't available elsewhere.

Finally, free or cheap PD programs can be a good way of trying out new kinds of software. For example, if you're not sure whether you could make use of a spreadsheet, a PD program will let you try before you hand over your cash for a, possibly expensive, commercial product like **Supercalc** or **Lotus 1-2-3**.

Avoiding the best and best-known PD software are **Galaxy**: a full-featured word processor which works like **Wordstar Professional** but includes pubdomain

obvious lines, circles, various brushes and fills, these include the ability to grab sections of the screen and use these as brushes, and various pseudo-3D effects like distorting images for perspective.

Unfortunately, cheaper programs that provide a reasonable degree of usefulness are thin on the ground. **Salvatore** is at hand, however, in the form of public domain software (see the accompanying box for possibilities).

ENTERTAINMENT

If the PC was considered poor for graphics it was long reckoned to be laughable for games. Which is odd when you look at what's available because although the PC may not have as many games as other computers, it has as many great games as any rival.

The classic PC game text really is a game at all, although it is definitely first-class entertainment. **Flight Simulator** (£35, Microsoft, 0734 500741) is now in version 3 and although many simulations make the same claim, FS3 is the one that really is 'the nearest thing to being there'. With superb instrumentation, stunning graphics and sublimely smooth, as well as add-on scenery disks that cover most of the US, Japan and Western Europe, FS3 provides endless fun.

If you prefer something more destructive, **Fallout** AT (£35, Murrell, 01 277 4644) delivers. It is graphically excellent and offers various outlets for your aggression including ground target bombing missions and dogfighting with M4s.

Adventure fans are well served with the complete collection of **Infocom** titles (£25 to £35, Midge, 0734 371666), and the **Magistrate** scrolls

minus for some at all, and a spelling checker.

Warpup: A database system that produces phase 4+ files (much cheaper than **AdaptiveTree's** £500 monstrosity), including report generation. It even supports networks.

Procoms: One of the best communications programs available, including commercial products costing up to £100.

Hack: A mammoth role-playing game, similar to the **Ultima** series but using character graphics. Will bring, say, wizards, against horrendous amounts of gold.

Among the kinds of programs you can find in PD libraries that are difficult to acquire commercially are:

Composer: Music composition system that allows you to compose, play and print out your works of art.

PC Key-draw: A feature-packed graphics editor, good for creating technical drawings and diagrams. Features mouse support, but also usable from the keyboard.

Useful utilities:

Waster: 4 Royal Terrace, (Glasgow, G3 7W), tel: 041 954 8852; 11 Uxbridge Street, Kensington, London W8 7U, tel: 01 256 3218

Advantage, 56 Bath Road, Cheltenham, G50 7W, tel: 0424 224700

PD Software Library, Wincoburn House, Beacon Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR9 1UL, tel: 0892 663798

Library (£35, Barnhill, 01 240 8838). While for role-playing games, **Ultima V** (£20, Micropro, 0695 543334) is the one to get for— a massive four-disk universe with hundreds of characters, dozens of towns and dungeons and a million ways to die.

One area in which the PC continues to be weak (deeply because of its graphic limitations) is the traditional computer arcade game. However, two products occupy a place in your collection are **Unsubmittable** (**Unsub** (£20, US Dept, 021 354 3389), a classic platformer & ladder romp, and **Tetris** (£20, Microsoft, 01 277 4644), a game that almost defies classification.



Tetris is a fast-moving puzzle game, totally addictive and you can install it as a memory-resident program (so it's always available) for those rare moments when serious work takes its toll. (Most companies have Tetris very soon after its appearance in the office.)

Finally, breaking new ground in the PC games field is the *Freelance* range - *Driller*, *Dark Side* and *Total Eclipse* - (CDO, Incisive, 07355 77288) which combine aspects of adventure and simulation with a gripping plot and superb solid 3D graphics.

MUSIC

Unlike the perceived problem areas like graphics and games, PC music is a genuine desert. With an ultra primitive sound chip and a fairly basic speaker the PC qualifies as the worst equipped computer for sound and music.

However, if you're determined, there are a few public domain programs around. See the PD Software box.

UTILITIES

Utilities are those programs that make using your PC easier and/or safer. And top of your list in this category should be *PC Tools Deluxe* (CSD, Everware Micro, 0385 785800), a collection of useful tools that allow you to recover accidentally deleted files, and even to get all your data back even if you format a disk.

The very first time you absent-mindedly delete a file representing several hours work, you'll consider it CSD well spent.

But *PC Tools* isn't just for the bad things. It also provides a disk cache for speeding up disk usage, facilities to optimise and backup your hard disk, and an easy-to-use DOS shell. Since *PC Tools* can also be loaded memory-resident it is particularly useful, and especially so for beginners.

One of the classic PC utility packages was Borland's *Sidekick* but this has since been replaced by *Sidekick Plus* which, although an excellent product, is bigger and more expensive and not 'an essential' by any means.

An alternative is *PC Desktop* (Shareware, most PD libraries) which provides a calculator, calendar, linked telephone and DOS shell in pop-up form. Evaluation copies are available for a couple of pounds, but the shareware registration fee is \$25. A similar product is *Homebase* (CSD, Brown Bag Software, 01 674 1106) which provides a database, text editor, calculator, calendar and course program.

COMMUNICATIONS

PC communications have a problem in the UK: the fact that most communications organisations in the UK where they don't use our peculiar 1200/75 bps vmodem system which is obligatory for joining Proton/Microcom.

If you don't need vmodem you have a far greater choice, but as it happens one of the leading communications packages - and among the best for value too - does support the Proton format. *Micro II* (683, MDP Ltd, 0225 80491) is a powerful package with a macro language, the ability to run in the background (a sort of limited multitasking) and is easy to use for all its power.

If you have a Commodore or Amstrad 286/386 modem, you get a copy of *Micro II* free, which is an excellent deal if you haven't yet bought a modem. ■

PRINTERS

Next week, the Express Essentials guide puts printers under the spotlight. Which models really stack up? In each of the various categories, Express selects the very best. Don't miss it!

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There are still a couple of pools programs for the Atari ST that guarantee to you performance better than chance (?) or promise to you power? to forecast the pools the way you want. Others are asking you for disk for free demos while weeks are going by and you are missing your chance for a dividend. Nevertheless **POOLS-SYSTEM** still remains the only one in the market that delivers the goods. Let's have a look at some facts. Fair, open, friendly and still the only one that does not require you to be some kind of a total expert or hot shot system analyst. Fact, **POOLS-SYSTEM** is the only one that performed even signally during the difficult & unpredictable Australian season. Fact, **POOLS-SYSTEM** 4 ways out of the recommended first 6, 10 homes out of the recommended first 15, 20; 366, start of the English season, the system topped it but of the 14 score draws & all 4 no score draws, **POOLS-SYSTEM** 3 out of the 12 score draws & 3 out of the 8 no score draws, 4 homes out of the recommended first 6, 33.3% homes out of the recommended first 7.5 ways out of the recommended 8, 5 out of the 7 score draws & 8 out of the 3 no score draws, 40 correct results out of the 58 possible. Fact, all forecasted printouts available at any time for any checks. So do not waste your time with any other programs or systems. They are not going to entertain your hopes or wishes. And to top all the facts, we guarantee that **POOLS-SYSTEM** performs better than any other pools program in the market on any computer, because we guarantee to you that using the **POOLSBUSTER** in cooperation with **POOLSPLANNER** you are going to win the pools more than once a year. **STOP PRESS!** what does the customer say? "I was very impressed with the general standard of the programs & their ease of use. I had a look around the Atari ST & what I found out the data without the use of the manual, which shows just how good the program structure is set out. To get to the point. The very first entry I did came up with 2 lines of 211) 8 prints. It bought me a week of £11.80. Not bad for a first attempt. Thanks for an amazing program. Regards P.J.L. Sedlitz, Name & address with held for obvious reasons."

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Mighty quintet steams in on cue

Andy Storer ventures into the future and takes to the skies to go off-world for a spot of strategy, billiards, and assorted carnage.



BILLIARDS SIMULATOR INFOGRAMES

Out on the ST later this month is the first Billiards sim we know of, from French graphic guru Infogrames. Catering for either one or two players, it offers a choice of three cue types, differing values of cushion and table friction, rebound and spin effects.

The multiplayer game also allows you to choose strength of shot, angle and ball placement. As it's French billiards, you won't be surprised to learn there are no pockets - the game's all about scoring points from canons.

GUARDIAN MOONS MICRODEAL

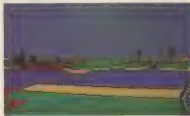
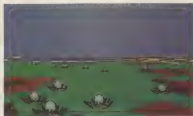
A varied five-stage multidirectional shooter featuring parallel scrolling and elaborate animated graphic sequences that include 40 on-screen colours at any one time. Guardian Moons certainly sounds superior. With an additional level called Reticular - a complex demo of animated horizontal scrolling - you can bet it'll look very good too. The snail? Save the Earth by taking out eight psycho-killers by becoming one yourself.



ARCHIPELAGOS LOGOTRON

In what sounds like an interesting fusion of Sentinel and Virus, you are floating above a 100 island world attempting to build bridges and find an Obelisk you must destroy. Your enemies are bees, eggs and a Beachcomber - a wanderer who turns land to

sand and sand to water. Featuring fabulous 3D landscapes, Archipelagos looks to provide a unique combination of strategy, in-depth gameplay and alternate reality. Due out in a converse near you on ST, Amiga and PC in spring.



F-16 COMBAT PILOT DIGITAL INTEGRATION

Riding the albatross of Microsoft's Falcon, comes the 1992 sim of the General Dynamics production line. Due out on ST, PC, Amiga and C64, Combat Pilot takes you from the classroom to the hangar, through pre-flight training to the cockpit of the latest hi-tech version of the F-16. There are five training

zones - air to air interception, counter-air operations, interdiction strike, battlefield ground support and reconnaissance - which need to be mastered before you can tackle operational status with one of eight squadrons. Work your way through the sorties and it's onto a multi-mission war game, Operation Conquest.



CUSTODIAN HEWSON

From the same team of Hinesley and Shroves that will one day bring you the long overdue Vexxwater, comes this little beauty - a superior shoot-em-up set in a world you need protect. You're up against waves of aliens and gun pods by collecting energy-absorbing pods and destroying mid-level guardians. To help you in this mission you have shields and demolition rockets, electro bolts, fire balls, multi-lasers, laser turrets, homing missiles and Megacore smart bombs.



It's best to buy NOT one game BUT two games or more from the club that gives you TWO for less than the price of ONE

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● This week we review six of the best titles currently available for the PC.

Zak McKracken and Looking For Levi just forgetting California Games on the Amiga go for an amusing approach, while Battle Chess and Strike Fleet offer more subtle challenges.

It looks like 1989's going to be a great year for PC owners!

BATTLE CHESS

After debating on the Amiga, Battle Chess was met with great acclaim for its graphics and sound, tempered by an average gameplay verdict. So, given the vast gulf between PC and Amiga specs, is a purchase worth the risk?

● GAMEPLAY

Featuring ten levels of difficulty and an opening library of 30,000 moves along with over five megabytes of 3D animation, Battle Chess sets out to beat us what might be termed the most active aspect of chess – namely the taking of pieces. Here, animated combat accompanies all captures and adds an element of humour to strategic manoeuvres.

As with most chess programs worth their salt, you can move by keyboard or mouse, reload and save games, set up positions for problem-solving, force, take back and suggest moves and replay whole games. In addition, you can also play games by modem, thus adding a new dimension to games by post or telephone.

Considering that on level 9 the computer takes over 21 minutes to make its move you can be assured of some strong competition.

● GRAPHICS AND SOUND

We could only test Battle Chess on a CGA card but at the end of the day, graphics are not that important in Chess in any case. The pieces are nevertheless well defined and animation smooth enough, although once you've made a move you may not necessarily always want to sit through the sometimes painfully slow animated sequences.



CGA graphics: just about adequate

Luckily there's a 2D view of the board too, which deploys of the more indulgent aspects of the games. Sound, which can be turned off and on, is not all that fantastic, and concentrates on supplying cartoon spot effects to the animated action.

● OTHER VERSIONS

The Amiga version does, of course, leave the PC one standing. In both graphics and sound there's a whole world of difference, but then you'd expect that wouldn't you?

● EXPRESS VERDICT

Not bad for a souped chess prag for beginners. While the strength of play is relatively weak compared to, say, Calossus K on the ST, Chessmaster on the Amiga or Sargon on the PC both its library of 67,000 moves, there's still enough here to impress.



Andy Storer

CALIFORNIA GAMES

California Games is another in the long line of very successful Epyx sports sims, involving six Californian-based sports events: Half Pipe Skateboarding, Foot Bag, Roller Skating, BMX Bike Racing, Flying Disk (frisbee to you and me) and the obligatory Californian pursuit – Surfing.

● GAMEPLAY

California Games allows one to eight players to compete or practise in individual or all six events in a but to achieve the accolade of Californian Champion and win loads 'a trophies.

Each event involves differing tactics with the basic theme of joystick-wiggling all the night time and the right place, with the skill factor being on how successful you are at making these decisions. The events are in true footbag Californian style, with debonair and skilful manoeuvres helping you achieve far better scores and bonuses.

Half Pipe Skateboarding and Foot Bag place you on a static screen, while the other events are played over a horizontally-scrolling backdrop. Each event contains many nice little touches, such as sharks making an appearance when you get wiped out on the Surfing event, which help to enliven the game and add to its overall interest.



● SOUND

Audio-visuals are best described as competent but not outstanding. They certainly don't exploit the Amiga's graphics and sound hardware to the full.

The sprites and backdrops seem to be straight conversions from the CG4 version, albeit with better resolution and colour. Surprisingly, the audio comprises re-sampled sound effects and tunes, making them sound clear, but a little simplistic when compared to the more conventional sound-sampling method.

● OTHER VERSIONS

The IBM versions can now be found on the compilation Games by US Gold, which also includes Out Run, Gauntlet II, 720° and Rolling Thunder.

● EXPRESS VERDICT

California Games is quite an enjoyable game, but it has got problems – namely a lack of lasting interest due to its limited number of events, and each event being rather too easy to complete. Therefore California Games is probably best suited to the younger Amiga gamblers.



Rik Haynes

HOTBALL

Hotball is a football simulation from a French software company called Satory, and includes its own



Computer controlled player about to score on own goal?

four-player joystick adaptor (which doubles as an anti-glaring device).

● GAMEPLAY

Not much to say, except that the game is viewed in an overhead fashion on a vertically-scrolling plot, with you playing against an opponent (either computer controlled or one of the possible three human players) in a timed match of football.

During play you have a range of possible moves such as kicking the ball at ground level, at 45° angles or into the air, which you have to master if you fancy your chances as footballer of the year.

Perhaps the worst feature of the game is the infuriating wait before play continues after scoring a goal – you want to get straight back into the action, not witness a crowd cheering.

● GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Audio-visuals are barely adequate, including jerky-moving sprites with only a few frames of animation and very simple sound spot-effects.

Of particular note is the annoying sampled soundtrack which continually repeats a few bits of music, and will either drive you mad or have you quickly reaching for the volume control.

● OTHER VERSIONS

Hotball is also available on the Amiga, but we haven't got our hands on a copy yet.

● EXPRESS VERDICT

Despite not being supplied with its own four-player adaptor, it fails to provide an enjoyable game of football and isn't blessed with state-of-the-art audiovisuals to compensate for this deficiency.

Overall we'd go for International Soccer by Microdeal which is a better football sim in gameplay and audio-visuals, is 25 cheaper, and also has a four-player option the adaptor allowing this costs an extra 250.



Rik Haynes

NIGHT HUNTER

Night Hunter allows you to take on the persona of a member of the living dead, i.e. a vampire, in a frantic search to seek out some holy medallions. These protect the general public from your blood-sucking exploitations. All this so that that old vampire, Count Dracula, can rule the world and live (die?) happily ever after.

● GAMEPLAY

Unfortunately for you, Professor Kim Helming, ace vampire hunter, has heard about your little adventure and has formed an army of vampire-killers and laid vampire



Night Hunter can drive you batty at times!

traps which you'll have to negotiate in this platform exploration type game.

Lucky, as a vampire you can change shape into either a bat or a werewolf and back to a vampire again, depending on what type of hazard you encounter in your travels. On your travels you pass through some Gothic-style buildings, looking like something out of a Hammer horror movie.

● **GRAPHICS AND SOUND**

The graphics aren't too bad and contain some nice backdrops and sprites, although the sprites are a little on the small side.

The sampled sound spook-effects are simple but appropriate.

● **OTHER VERSIONS**

No details on the other versions are currently available.

● **EXPRESS VERDICT**

Night Hunter is an agreeable release, which conjures up a good atmosphere with its audio-visuals and gameplay, and will appeal to the expert and novice explorer alike.



Rik Haynes



Phantom Fighter is another scrolling shoot-em-up, one which supports some great backdrop graphics backed up by tough gameplay. It's designed and programmed by a new Ireland-based software design team called Emerald Software.



Vertically-scrolling shooting mayhem is level one

● **GAMEPLAY**

You're given the task of controlling a spacecraft, and must travel through sand storms, volcanoes and lava surfaces wiping out any alien craft that you meet along the way.

Fortunately, some of these aliens yield collectable pods which'll give you more powerful weaponry, which you'll need if you're going to take out the well-armed and armoured alien guardians at the end of every level.

● **GRAPHICS AND SOUND**

Visuals consist of very well designed backdrops, slightly marred by the average sprite designs that accompany them.

Audio supports the usual range of weapon and explosion sound effects.

● **OTHER VERSIONS**

Phantom Fighter makes a superior audio-visual outing on the Amiga (at least) but don't hold your breath for the ST version because Mitech considers that the ST can't handle the graphics.

● **EXPRESS VERDICT**

For a scrolling shoot-em-up, Phantom Fighter doesn't provide a fast enough response to your control movements, which can be very frustrating at times. Having said that, the backdrop graphics are very attractive and the game is a toughnut to crack.

At the end of the day Phantom Fighter's yet another shoot-em-up without any truly outstanding features. Nothing more, nothing less.



Rik Haynes

LOOKING FOR LOVE



Swirl, Swirl, Taste and Touch, you can guess your main objective. And they're only some of the documented keywords!

How dare be outrageous to succeed in this game and, as the author states in the introduction, sooner or later you'll be caught in a social disease from a keyboard. Using pull-down menus you can adjust Larry's speed or the volume of the accompanying music. Crucially, you can also adjust the Fifth level. Seeing as how fast we'll be able to default to the trap, it's fortunate you can save games when you're exhausted.

● **GRAPHICS AND SOUND**

A 3D animated adventure which takes you from jet airplanes to TV dating shows to South Pacific Islands, Larry's graphics are above average for the machine and, even with the usual negligible sound effects of the PC, add an element of humor to the main wailing you in the past.

● **OTHER VERSIONS**

There might be an Amiga version out later this year, but for the time being only an ST version is definite.

● **EXPRESS VERDICT**

Great fun even for those who've never touched a bottle of Grecian 2000 in their lives. Looking For Love is a stylishly packaged descent into the scabrous waters of Naanuclea, USA. As



A sedate and amusing reflection of life as a nerd in America

the cover states, "In the War between the Sees, don't be an exiled innocent bystander".



Andy Storer



port section of the screen is rather small.

Audio is of the usual low quality due to the limited sound hardware found on the PC standard.

● **OTHER VERSIONS**

Strike Fleet is also available on the CG4, where it fares better in the audio department but is only available on disc.

● **EXPRESS VERDICT**

Strike Fleet offers PC owners the chance to play a slightly different scenario from the average simulation, with a realistic and complete representation of the myriad of tasks involved in being a Strike Fleet commander. It should have the war simulation fan occupied for quite some time.



Rik Haynes

Strike Fleet allows you to take on the role of a strike fleet commander in a naval warfare simulation involving various scenarios, each with its own tasks and objectives. Your ultimate goal is to become Fleet Admiral (picking up any awards along the way) should your strategic skills be sufficient.

● **GAMEPLAY**

Given that you'll have complete control over your fleet, from choosing your flagging to deciding which route you're going to use to take out an enemy vessel, all controlled by clearly displayed menu options and on-screen screens.

Adaptability is the name of the game, though, because the enemy will throw attacks at you from the air, on and below the sea's surface, therefore forcing you to adopt differing tactics as the game progresses.

● **GRAPHICS AND SOUND**

Visuals are up to scratch with varied and attractive screens featuring a good use of definition and colour throughout (especially EGA graphics), although the view-



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ZAK MCKRACKEN



First of the 1989 outings from Lucasfilm, and bringing with it a whole range of cut-throat Industrial Light and Magic for the small screen.

Along with Looking for Love, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, and all the recent Wotcon adventures, this release just goes to prove that America takes its interactive entertainment seriously. That's not to say the subject matter isn't as hilarious, just that it's light years ahead of the kind of D&D that posers for adlibs have over here.

● GAMEPLAY

Zak's a reporter with the National Reporter, a Sunday Sport type paper. Reporter is probably the wrong term, since most of the stories are fictional, and so when Zak discovers that aliens have built a stupidly machine designed to reduce human IQs, no-one will believe him. That is except for three other matters who offer to help him take the game's doses of puzzles, unmask the aliens and destroy the machine.

You control Zak and command the other characters by controlling sentences with your mouse composed of the verbs and nouns on display. Movement of characters is effected by clicking on Walk and pointing to where in the animation screen you want the character to move. Punctuating the action are 'cutscenes' which provide clues and information about characters encountered.

As with all adventures, it's very important to pay

attention to every location and object/character you come across. Unlike most other adventures, though, there's no real way you or any of your colleagues can get killed; your only worry is the amount of cash you have in your pocket.

The game is fairly on exploring scenarios and puzzles and enjoying the wacky humour. And wacky certainly is the word for the unfolding storyline. You only have to read the accompanying spoof newspaper to get the drift. Alien amusement parks found on Mars, two-headed squarrels, English winning records for non-stop hiccup, microbes turning into space shuffles.

● GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The screen is divided into a message line at the top where data and conversation is displayed, and a sentence line at the bottom where you construct sentences that let all characters what to do. This bottom area also displays an inventory.

Between the two is the animation window, where a camera's eye view of proceedings is relayed. All action is punctuated by a great range of voices, dissolves and pans, giving the whole game a time feel. Animation is fast and, even on a CGA card, looks design and action hold up well.

● OTHER VERSIONS

The C64 version has a good standard of audiovisuals - with the ST and Amiga versions promising substantial improvements in the audio departments and superior visuals for course.



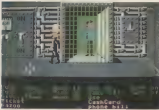
Are you good (bad) enough to be a Sunday Sport type hack?

● EXPRESS VERDICT

It's great to see a company releasing product which advances the scope of interactive fiction. Although the action is let down a little by the graphics and the almost unmemorable sound of the PC, the game is very funny, highly original and worth a look. Once Lucasfilm begin to transfer its film skills to disk there's no knowing where it'll all end.

★★★★

Andy Storer



C64 Zak: not bad graphics and sound



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5. You must fill in the details requested on the voucher.

The word

Word processing is more than just bashing out words on screen. Peter Worlock explains the subtleties, complexities and infinite varieties of wp features

Just about every business PC in the world puts used for word processing at some time, and many business PCs do nothing else. And at home, just about everyone writes something every now and then - and you don't have to be an author or journalist. Employees in all kinds of business occasionally have reports to write, teachers and lecturers write up course material, students write essays, and we all write letters - to magazines and newspapers, begging letters to the bank, requests of advice to friends and companies etc.

For most writers, the first requirement is a printer. Although it is possible to send floppy disks, we're still a long way from the paperless economy that computer manufacturers used to talk about. The second requirement is some suitable software.

There are WP programs costing several hundred pounds, and there are others in public domain libraries that will cost little more than the cost of a blank disk. But if all you're doing is putting words on paper, via the computer's screen and printer, why the hell are you paying?

As always, you get what you pay for, and although all word processing programs will let you compose and print a bit of text, the more you spend with which you can do it, varies enormously.

The basics

Just about all programs will let you type at the keyboard and show you what you've typed on the screen. By various combinations of control keys, menus and mouse actions, you will be able to edit what you have written; delete some words or sentences; insert new material; correct mistakes; break sentences and paragraphs into shorter units; or join existing portions of the text.

Generally, you can get your text scrolling right, and looking good. You can then save it to tape or disk for future reference, and/or print out your document on your printer.

At this stage, what you're gaining over using a typewriter is the ability to edit, revise and correct without having to use a lot of Tippex or using up masses of paper in re-typing the same text over and over.

However, WP programs also estimate a lot of minor aspects of writing. For example, on a typewriter a bell rings to let you know you've printing near the end of a line. This is so that you can work out whether your text word or two will fit, or whether you need start a new line. WP programs handle this automatically through a facility called word wrap.

Also on a typewriter, it's possible to get so engrossed in your work you suddenly find yourself typing off the end of the paper, producing ugly pages in the process. With a

word processor that comes to be a problem because the software lets you put page breaks wherever you want.

These and other aspects come under the heading of document presentation - how your text will appear on the finished pages. When using a typewriter you have to bear these things in mind as you type, which can be extremely distracting. And mistakes in typing can cause you a lot of extra work.

With the word processor you can concentrate on what you're writing, leaving the presentation side until after you've finished creating the text.

Paying for power

As you move up the price scale you're paying for extra power. These extra features fall into a number of different categories.



• There's little excuse for poorly written, badly spelled text.

Some are additional features that make using the software easier. For example, you find more ways of moving around your document. Obviously you can move forward and backwards a letter at a time, or up and down a line at a time. But more flexibility makes a program easier to use, so some packages provide ways of moving by word, sentence, paragraph, screen and page.

Other enhanced features include more powerful editing facilities. Among the most useful here are cut & paste, and search & replace.

Cut & paste allows you to mark a block of text, which can be anything from a single word up to several pages. Such a block can then be deleted (much quicker than deleting a character at a time), or out from one place and pasted into the

document somewhere else (paste the name), or copied without deleting the original block and pasted elsewhere.

Search & replace is an extremely useful tool, especially if you create long documents. Imagine a multi-page business report, or an essay in which - when you thought you'd finished - you find you've misspelled a key name. With search & replace you specify the misspelling and the correct version, and the software then automatically goes through your document correcting every instance of the mistake.

Other features fall into the category of document presentation, starting with the ability to use basic type variants like bold, italic and underlined type. Some primitive WP packages use special codes which appear on screen but not in the printed document, which means that you can be misled as to how your printed pages will look.

A better solution is to show such effects on screen by display effects like inverse characters, or by using different colours. Best of all are those packages (usually on the ST, Amiga and Macintosh) although also found on the PC, which actually use bold, italic or underlined type on screen.

Also in the category of document presentation are headers and footers. These two devices are more or less identical except that, as their names suggest, one appears at the head of a page, and the other at the foot. Headers and footers are present pieces of text - often only one line but sometimes more - which are to appear on every page. They can include your name, address and telephone number, for example. Or a running title, or chapter and page numbers.

One feature that not everyone needs in their WP programs is a word counter, but you'll often see a package planned in computer magazines because it doesn't have one. The reason for this is that professional writers like and loathe numbers of words. In the case of freelance writers, you get paid by the word so it's vital to know how much you've written.

But even salaried writers whose pay is secure need to know how much they've written. Journalists and authors who write in work that is consistently longer or shorter than an editor wants become very unpopular.

Designer docs

Any word processor worth the name will let you produce neat, properly written documents, with the usual dithers of editing facilities at your disposal. There's little excuse for poorly written, badly spelled text.

However, the more advanced WP programs go much further, allowing you to turn out pages that are things of beauty, a joy to gaze upon.

• **Multiple fonts:** Although too many fonts are like too many cooks, the ability to use one or two font changes in a document really lets your pages out of the ordinary. However, being able to do so depends on your printer having the facility, and your WP software being able to drive your printer. (We talked at painful length about this in the last two instalments of the Learning Curve.)

• **Multiple columns:** The ability to create text in two or more columns, newspaper style, is not one that you'll want to employ in your business letters. But in reports it can be useful, and a good word processor with this facility may save you the cost of a desktop publishing program.

• **Imported graphics:** This is a definite plus for many word processing applications. In business you can import charts and graphs, others can use drawings and sketches to illustrate a point, or you can create your own headed stationery, or simply imagine up a personal letter. And again, if your WP software can do this, you may not need a dedicated DTP program.

• **Footnotes:** One for the academics, and not to be confused with footers. A footnote is an explanatory piece of text at the bottom of the page which contains the thing being explained. ■

Easier can be better

It has been said that word processing can make writing easier, but it can't make writing better. Is that it, can it?

For example, even the best writers have certain bad spots when it comes to spelling, and poor spelling tarnishes your image as a writer. So an automatic spelling checker can do wonders for your image - as well as being easier than reaching for the dictionary (usually based on a distant bookshelf) and looking up the correct spelling - which can be difficult if you don't know how to spell the word in the first place.

An automatic thesaurus can add even more gloss to your grained documents. If you're struggling for just the right word, a quick key-press will bring up a range of possibilities, saving you long stretches of agonised staring at the screen. Or if you find you've used the word "but" too many times in your letter to the credit card company, the thesaurus will point out that you could also use "impatient", "boiling" and "atrocious", not to mention "terrible" and "ghastly".

YOUR FORMAT

ST

Anyone who starts reading the ST column from the bottom upwards will have missed a few rather down there this week. Richard

Moreno has gone on to other things and I have stopped into his shoes. From now on all movies I'll be dealt with by me, and forgive me if I occasionally get edged but this is the man who thought the Dragon II was a pretty neat machine when it first came out. It became my first computer, and I can still remember paying eight quid for a Space Invaders console — as published by Microdeal. Imagine how worked up I got three days when I slip a copy of the Goldrunner into the BT's drive.



* The Atari ST: Is it the new Spectrum? See Power to the People

in the only proper manner - by not only writing the review but also laying out the page myself with Fleet Street Publishers. I ran them off on the laser printer to see them incorporated into the magazine. The *Wunderlich*, and just about holding their own in quality with the much pricier Apple package that produced the rest of the magazine.

I'm breaking one of the cardinal rules of journalism, the one that Miss Doon talks about yourself: just do what you know where going to be on this page is false, and that my relationship with the ST qualifies as Serious Love Affair and not merely a One-Night Stand. I bought my first computer because I thought I might be able to write an article about home computers for a general-interest magazine. Now, five books and hundreds of articles later, there comes a computer on which I'm not only going to be writing a book but also laying out the pages and publishing it myself. Now there's what you call a powerful machine!

There's no doubt that the STs playing us part in developing computers are an integral force, as anyone who's seen the work of award-winning artist Stuart David Handy would agree. And Good Quilley's most graphic illustration is the Fish! adventure we've used here. Both artists are the ST, and neither has it that my hero Terry Gower is short or just bristly with some slandering work that has been heaving away on his work.

But could anyone want to live an excellent life? Linda Wright, a someone who I knew only as the author of several adventure games on the Spectrum and Amstrad. Then the other week she sent me one of those little blue texts and asked me what I thought of the graphics she'd done on it? Stunning, was what I thought of them. Almost of Geoff Quilley standard, and that's high praise indeed. They included some beautiful rural scenes, and some pretty busy stuff too, just right for a creepy subterranean

Anyone looking for a first-class artist need look no farther. Just write to 19 Briar Close, Nailes, Bristol BS15 1QG. And no, I'm not in a commission. This is pure altruism. There might be some cash in a week's time. Which isn't for us.

Mike Chernard

[illegible]

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SPEX

Spect-ed soon

It's encouraging to see in Spectatorism aren't being left out of all the fun & games of 16 bit computing. Some of the ST and Amiga titles which have turned you a shade of ashy green at a head-on crash due to the complexity of the not-so-bearable computer.

Probably the most mind-boggling title for the ST is *Golden Chestnut*. The original ST version received huge critical acclaim and saw its whole lot of reviewers' good graces. It's an extremely nice bit of strategy, strategy and strategy as you take the helm of the AOC Squadron, an advanced search carrier with a brand new set of weapons.

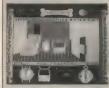
In the dark

Call me a square, stick-in-the-mud, party-popping old cynic if the urge takes you, but personally I think the whole computing industry has become decidedly boring of late.

The only company coming up with original and innovative Spectrum software is Incentive. Software houses are certainly inventing new, revolutionary titles which supposedly change the face of computing, yet few do. Freespace must rank alongside Ultimate's *Flammarion* (Knights), *Head Over Heels* etc as one of the truly ground-breaking programming techniques.

Its latest Freespace outing *Total Eclipse* has already received more than its fair share of plauds, but here's another teeny weeny little mention for the game which helped preserve my sanity for the Christmas period (no mean feat when they show *The Seemless* for the sixth consecutive year).

Out of the three games to employ the Freespace concept, this Egyptian-tinged jobbie is my favourite. Why so? Well, the playing area's much more confined, which means you don't get lost quite so regularly, and the screen updates slightly faster than in *Dark Side*. The whole shebang is more exciting, in short, it's one of the best Speccy titles of 1988. Now all I need is for some kind, considerable and generally wonderful honour being to send in a notation.



I have had a short blast on a little bit of (don't worry, I washed my hands afterwards) and despite being dismissed not to like it, after a few minutes play I was hooked. Made no mistake. *Golden Chestnut* wasn't so convinced, without a strategic Super fast 3D tiled graphics, multiple weapons and a playing area which makes almost everything else look teenage ramp aged and not going to be easily fired into 486.

Realtime Software was put on the case and of course this did it. There are the guys. Remember, they're professional gamers like J.J. Beaverton and Scargill in the pit. Previous versions look impressive, but at the end of the day a game's worth can only be

judged by how it hangs together and plays as a whole. But not at the end of January, I want to be first in the queue to see how CC fares.

Also due on the Speccy screen is *W* a Starfighter II. This was another 3D tiled graphics mega game, and a ridiculously good one at that. It came in just after *Golden Chestnut* in the *Topgun Games* of '88 (issue 7/8) and at any windowing screen this should right.

It relied more on visual influence than graphics, which hardly holds water for a Spectrum comparison. Not much detail, yet, sure that it's likely to consist of more basic graphics rather than tiled 3D ones.

It is 35-bit graphics. There was article costly it had beautiful, glowing chess structures and fairly decent action. On the Speccy, everything looks decidedly stale. The chess seemed I played was smooth and quite addictive, but as the whole bit is fairly remarkably horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up.

Other titles set to make the transition from 16-bit to 8-bit are *Capitaine Blood*, a graphicsly superb space opera, and *Exterminator*, a 3D scrolling shooter from John Phillips of *Nebula* fame.

The fact that so many seemingly early and difficult conversions are being attempted really does show the commitment about the Speccy's still got.

Come again?

Let Sir Wally, the game that started your gaming soul time at the post-office days of computing and game play. It's of opportunity for double extended play, in back on the shelves, thanks to *Mastercraft*.

If you admit to buying that not fast time, sound, you're really going to show you are! *Exterminator* too good to remember is need only know 16-bit it's one of the best of the best of the whole platform and indeed game. 2088 has got a lot to answer for.

Spiritual exercise

While most other companies have abandoned Speccy owners of an adventurous gamehouse, Level 5 deserves a hefty pat on the back for unapologetic support. *Exterminator* just enhanced the possibilities as far as games go, occurred, its next game, called *Exterminator*, sees you play a ghost trying to escape his murderer. Victim or what?

Speccy Mac emulator...

I have just heard from one of my spies at the company (LOL, so exaggerated), it was a brand which was in the Computer Magazine that *Emulator* has launched a very interesting package which could allow you Spectrum to do a possible impression of the Apple Mac. Pardon, priced at £49.95, lets you have an on-line drive from old and includes a *Emulator* access. And this is on the Macintosh that will transfer details from *Emulator* on OS/2 £79.95.

MGT's DIY

MGT has stepped in to make sense of the 24, incompatibility games mentioned in *Exterminator* with the release of the *Flux*, a small widget that should allow successful conversion with a host of add-on. MGT's new 4-D and *Exterminator* are entered for as well as the *Opus Diver* and *Mastercraft*. MGT's attitude is unacceptable, but I can't help thinking it should be *Exterminator* providing a remedy.

The *Flux* costs £7.95 direct from MGT, Lab-side Technology Park, Phoenix Way, Swansley SA7 9SL.

Ruben Aisley

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- **ShedMaster Joenss Greave** - see how the task of maintenance has changed since the introduction of this purpose-built HST depot. Manage the overnight shift on four consecutive worknights, with a 12-hour day shift working as well as running the production machine sets in time to take up the scheduled running days.

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YOUR FORMAT



Expressed views

Germany has a large user base for the C64, and this is hardly surprising since every electronic store supports nearly the C64 and Amiga. Even walking through tiny villages, there will be a shop window C64 or Amiga.

Most cars in Germany are expensive, but I'm glad all my electronic gadgets are very cheap. You could pick up a C44 with all the necessary bits and pieces for under £99 and an Amiga for under £300. That's the advantage of having Commodore's European base in the same country.

One fact worthy of mention is that even though there were machines everywhere, they didn't have much software. It was mainly Peachtree and other budget titles, although software for the Amiga was readily available.

Passing through France we picked up quite a few French computer mugs. Many of them seem to borrow ideas from British ones - or is it the other way round? I'll give you a clue. They all feature lots of smiling or grinning faces.

Whole listing

This listing will make your whole OS display wiggle with noise. The program also has a few instructions: for example, YOUR HOME means that you must press the SHIFT and

Wiggle listing

```

10  PRINT D0 HOMEPLACE NAME
11  RESTORE B-49152
20  FOR L=205 TO HEAD:POKEB(L-2),A NEXT L
30  DATA 128,169,142,141,21
40  DATA 3,169,13,141,20
50  DATA 3,88,96,168,48
60  DATA 141,18,258,162,6
70  DATA 173,114,193,238,21
80  DATA 182,141,22,208,193
90  DATA 9,136,208,253,232
100 DATA 224,176,208,227,168
110 DATA 267,141,21,192,208
120 DATA 46,192,169,27,141
130 DATA 12,268,169,1,141
140 DATA 25,206,189,127,141
150 DATA 17,206,189,178,141
160 DATA 26,205,78,40,234
170 IF D0 < 9575 THEN PRINT DATA ERROR: END
180 B=44408
190 FOR L=205 TO HEAD:POKEB(L-2),A NEXT L
200 DATA 204,204,202,282,269,203,203
210 DATA 204,204,204,204,205,205,205
220 DATA 205,205,206,206,206,206,206
230 DATA 206,207,207,207,207,207,207
240 DATA 206,206,206,206,206,206,206
250 DATA 205,205,205,205,205,204,204
260 DATA 204,204,203,203,203,202,202
270 DATA 211,210
280 FOR L=205 TO POKEB(A59)+1:POKEB(A406+L):
POKEB(A51+L),POKEB(A406+L)
290 POKEB(A59+1),POKEB(A406+L)
300 POKEB(A51),POKEB(A406+L) NEXT L
310 PRINT "CLU HOMEPL"
320 PRINT "YES OK"
330 PRINT "YES OK"
340 PRINT "YES OK"
350 PRINT "YES OK"
360 PRINT "YES OK"
370 PRINT "YES OK"
380 PRINT "YES OK"
390 PRINT "YES OK"

```

CLR HOME keys while inside the speed mode. That also goes for TRIP ON.

If you have entered the data correctly the program will tell you. Lines 200-270 are the data for the menu of the veggie. You can change it yourself, making sure you stay inside the data boundaries. Wiggle effect is also like the ripple effect in water. The program runs under interrupt, so you can still move your mouse and code.

1989 release.

Hot C&A games heading your way this year
are:

Technology = Creative

Out on any-day news, Technomorph takes you on a very high speed car chase against the bad guys. You also get the chance to step outside and look for a bit.



- Technology: Due soon

Baker's Fall House • Denmark

Can't wait until this year. You must all know how boring the TV program is, so let's not say too much about the game. Could be good family entertainment, though, so keep an eye on it.

H. Adams, *Princeton, Princeton, Princeton*

That says it more eloquently than we could be making their computer debut on the CD.

Thanks a million.

We've got thoroughly out of synch these past few weeks what with showing off to Germany, so a big thank you to Rick Hanna, who helped us out in a row. & Thanks also to Jerro Holbert, for his kind comments on our Anzika device in America!

Printing error

In the Charman bumper issue we put together a little complaint letter. Unfortunately, there was an HXA file address to question 2 should have been 2 bytes in a word not 16.

Habitat loss

An American breed pioneer to tell us that Rob Hubbard has surpassed plenty of races since he left England for California. One of them was for a game called One on One, which I based on the phone. Being Rob Hubbard sounded 100 per cent cool, with very clear samples. But also dogs races for other games, but we'll probably never hear them as only the best American software is considered over here.

Cheats

Here's where you the reader can contribute. If you have any ideas, jokes or tips, send them to CSM CREATS, New Computer Experts, Future Publishing Ltd, 4 Green Street, Bath BA1 1LE.

BEEB BOX

Serious stuff

I always breathe a sigh of relief when the festive season ends. OK, I know that's a bit of a cliche, but I've just seen what the Beeb has in store for next year. And it's not just a matter of expense and hassle, but another factor: you, the viewer, get to see what the Beeb has in store for next year. And it's not just a matter of expense and hassle, but another factor: you, the viewer, get to see what the Beeb has in store for next year.

In this back-to-work spirit I have been considering an impressive educational package, the second part of the BBC's Technology and Design course, which gives you no fewer than three disks and manuals.

A + DFS

There must be many people with an ADFS system who only use DFS mode. Why? After all, many BASIC programs can be changed to work just by changing "DRIVE" to the equivalent "OR" command.

The software is designed to be used alongside the disk version of the same name, and as such is a pure companion.

I gave the package to a Dart College and Technology (DCT) teacher to review, and the following edited comments are his.

"The first game is based upon the effective use of information to solve problems in running a bus company. I found putting in the information a little tedious. It was good for the benefit of experience it gave, and it

brought home sensible utilisation of money, time and scheduling.

"An Adventure Of Sorts uses physical statistics as the basis for an adventure game in which various physical agents and sociological problems have to be solved. Generally entertaining and well thought out. My children and I enjoyed playing it very much.

"Pack 1 highlights problems encountered in industry every day in placing boxes on pallets, and looks at the design of cardboard packaging. The program uses 3D views of various packing systems, and while there are no particular goals to achieve there are general concepts to observe.

"All the programs are well presented, with good manuals, although there is no consistent case interface throughout.

New beeb-em-ups

As mentioned last week, while I was talking to programmer Peter Peier, he outlined one new project he was working on. The first, which should be complete as you are reading this, being *Richard 2*.

In this project you can play either character, which should please fans of both (possibly) and MCV's with accurate statistics. The game is at four levels with 30-35 screens, and so won't be in each level. The biggest screen will be at each stage, 8 x 4 characters in size, a full screen of action.

As soon as that is out of the way Peter will be starting work on *Phoenix*.

How does he get the work? Well, as he said, "I let the deadline" Peter was also disappointed about the future of the BBC games market, and he predicted it would look up well throughout 1983. That's good news indeed for the new year.

Andrew Brown

MSV TR

After...bomber

One game I have just received for evaluation is *Afterbomber* from Activision (Macquarie) Incorporated, despite being from this country and two copies of *Afterbomber* I only managed to load the game once. The one time it loaded was when I used my personal stereo!

Obviously the levels on the tape are wrong, as this is the first piece of software I have had loading problems with. Due to the Christmas and New Year holidays I have been unable to contact Activision to obtain replacement copies, but it can't tell you from the brief details I had to play *Afterbomber* that the MSX version is as good as, if not better than, any of the 8-bit versions. Graph-



ics are adequate rather than brilliant, but the fire and speed of the game has been well captured. It can obtain a release of this

game that will load constantly I will be able to tell you how the game plays in later issues.

Rogal blunder

In the rush to get a double-sized article for the Christmas issue, one or two errors crept in regarding the Kings Valley 2 tips. All the codes for this game should consist of eight letters, so if you find it with a couple of the letters as listed, you would find that the program

CP/M emulator - the address

For those of you who own an MSX 2, use a Spectravideo SVI or use the Spectravideo 80-column adapter, I now have the address for the CP/M Plus emulator program. Write to: R.V.S. Datacentre GmbH, Hohenstrasse 2, D 8000 München 45, West Germany.

gram would not accept them. I apologise for this and include more new codes for this game. They are as follows:

- For 32 lines on Level 2, type LUPPICK
- For 72 lines on Level 2, type DASHEDMM
- For 43 lines on Level 4, type ACCORDION
- If you want to start on a much higher level, try RECKON on Level 25

Also mentioned in the Christmas issue was the West Mouse and Cheese software. It should have said (for a far cry - £5) that the Cheese 2 software is for the MSX 2, and is available separately (most MSX 2s are supplied with mouse included).

Terah Neal



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MSX



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Here are the highlights of the previous issues - but remember they also contain all your regular favourites: news, games reviews, machine columns, beginners' guide, controversies, tech tips, letters, P8est, vouchers etc etc.

- Issue 1: Future of computing, PC graphics, revival of Basic, Xmas games
- Issue 2: Which computer?, the perfect wordprocessor, Konix console
- Issue 3: Portable computing, Alan Sugar profile part 1, yuppie software
- Issue 4: Sega's 16-bit console, best value PC, games that change your life
- Issue 5: PC 200 fiasco, DT7 guide, computer art, Unix explained
- Issue 6: MOT Coupe, careers in computing, Beakline profile, cracking
- Issue 7/8: Best games of '88, review of the year, look forward to '89
- Issue 9: Censorship controversy, classic computer problems solved

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PSsst!

A final page stupidly handed over to cynical old hack, Private I

MEGASCOOP!

The PSsst! crossword

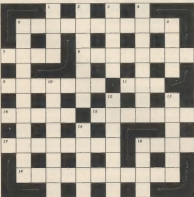
After weeks of research I'm delighted to present the ultimate computer crossword. You should be aware that there are absolutely NO silly clues (especially not 10 across), no giveaway answers (especially not 5 down) and most definitely no jibes beyond the enormous personal satisfaction I am sure you will feel at completing it.

ACROSS

- 5 How Amstrad's boss disciplines his staff? No, he munches them for breakfast (5, 6)
- 7 Electronic Rate in a muse (4)
- 8 Accounting software firm is wise and cuddly (8)
- 9 Error message is naughty document (1,4)
- 11 Memory of a sheaf (3)
- 14 On following up Greek letter computer firm organises handheld machines (5)
- 15 Graphics chip in the Amiga - a mess (7)
- 17 Essential piece of wood? Both a piano and a computer have one (8)
- 18 Huh! You won't get this one. No one but only of the trade knows the first name of Electronic Art's boss, and being American, Mr Hawkins has not got the sort of mispronunciation you could easily guess. A wee clue: it's a verb that has something to do with drugs and travel (4)
- 19 "It's far you host" should be this software house's slogan - having left Comel so muddled (1,1)

DOWN

- 1 Japanese console firm mires over a long period of time (4)
- 2 Cent your mind back four or five years to the early ZX Microbits, and it's from tables like these that software houses used to



Shoot from the Lip... the week's most quotable sayings

It's an extremely lucrative endorsement and an anastomosis. Like your Aunt Ethel it never seems to go away." Commodore on the dear old C84

"In a hundred years' time it will become apparent that games programmers are the chimney sweeps of our generation." Industry commentator Mike Sculion on the plight of the underpaid whizz kids.

"Keep an eye out for names such as Eneopose, MSX, OL, Tandy Colour Computer and the Commodore Plus

Fear. These are all among the industry's walking dead and should not be approached unless you contemplate opening a computer museum." Geoff Wheelwright of The Times disabing out some buying advice.

"About this time every year numerous corporations seeking publicity target the toy industry with sensationalist charges that games media coverage. This year is no exception."

Nintendo's Peter Main on allegations that Nintendo games cause children to become more aggressive.

NEXT WEEK

Essential printers

Just which printers are the best for your needs? Express presents a fact-packed guide

Virgin territory

We explore the interactive computer/video package from Virgin which recreates the trek to the North Pole

Ten things you never knew...

...about programming languages. Let Express help explain away the mysteries of programming, in the company of Grey Matters

So farewell then, Alan Sugar

The mammoth Alan Sugar series comes to an end, with our very own William Poel looking forward to what the future holds for Amstrad

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All your favourite Express regulars, including another bumper letters section, beginners, tech tips, machine-specific columns, reviews, previews, news and all the rest - PLUS, of course, the Express crossword solution

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